

Summary Report of the Second Landlocked Developing Countries' Ambassadorial Level Meeting

Date: 5 March 2020

Location: Conference Room 7

Time: 15:00-16:30

1. Afghanistan	2. Malawi
3. Armenia	4. Mali
5. Azerbaijan	6. Moldova
7. Bhutan	8. Mongolia
9. Bolivia	10. Nepal
11. Botswana	12. North Macedonia
13. Burkina Faso	14. Paraguay
15. Central African Republic	16. South Sudan
17. Chad	18. Tajikistan
19. Ethiopia	20. Turkmenistan
21. Kazakhstan	22. Uganda
23. Kyrgyzstan	24. Uzbekistan
25. Lao PDR	26. Zambia
27. Lesotho	28. Zimbabwe

Invited Guest Speaker: H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General

In attendance: USG and High Representative and OHRLLS

Agenda item 1: WELCOME REMARKS, ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND BRIEFING ON KEY ELEMENTS OF THE VISIT OF THE CHAIR OF THE GROUP, H.E. AMBASSADOR KAIRAT UMAROV, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF KAZAKHSTAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN GENEVA WHICH TOOK PLACE ON 5-6 FEBRUARY 2020.

Chair, H.E. Ambassador Kairat Umarov, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He briefed the meeting on the outcome of his visit to Geneva in his capacity as Chair of LLDC Group on 5-6 February 2020. He informed that on February 5 he attended the opening of the 69th executive session of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board and delivered a statement on behalf of the Group. In his statement he emphasized that half of the 32 LLDCs were also LDCs and that all three groups of vulnerable countries (LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS), equally need the support of the Organization so that they can achieve the SDGs by 2030. He called on the UNCTAD Secretariat and the Member States to reconsider the approach to overcoming the challenges of these countries through the understanding that many challenges and threats are of cross-border nature. He informed that he also had bilateral meetings with the heads of UN agencies based in Geneva in particular, UNCTAD, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the International Trade Center (ITC) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) and he discussed priorities of Kazakhstan's Chairmanship and also discussed opportunities for support to LLDCs.

He highlighted that during these meetings he emphasized the importance of finding practical solutions to facilitate the implementation of the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda in LLDCs and building synergies between these agencies to avoid duplication. He noted that the heads of these organizations had assured him that they will support the LLDCs including in participating in interactive dialogues whenever they are in New York.

He informed that he also discussed with the leadership of UNCTAD and ITC, the possibility of organizing (in collaboration with the UN-OHRLLS and the World Bank), within the framework of the WTO Ministerial Conference, a joint side event or session on trade and transit facilitation involving LLDCs, transit countries and developed countries, as well as private sector. He noted that would facilitate multi-stakeholder involvement in addressing the special needs of LLDCs. He highlighted that the event could be organized as part of the LLDCs Ministerial Meeting scheduled for 7 June 2020. He also indicated that he also met with Ambassadors of Paraguay, Afghanistan and Mongolia and they proposed to include some LLDCs related language in the outcome document of the WTO-MC12. He noted that two elements will be proposed, on collaboration on implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and establishment of an informal LLDC Group within the WTO.

He indicated that during his meeting with the ITC Executive Director a.i. Ms. Dorothy Tembo, he discussed ITC's experience in supporting LLDCs in the field of trade facilitation and strengthening the capabilities of the private sector, especially of the level of small and medium-sized businesses. He underscored that it was important to further explore cooperation with ITC. He highlighted that as a practical follow-up, arrangements were made to convene an interactive dialogue with ITC together with the International Chamber of Commerce on 26 March 2020.

He informed that during his meetings with the UN Agencies in Geneva they also discussed the idea of developing a Roadmap or a visionary document on what practical steps could be taken to facilitate implementation of the VPoA and the Decade of Action. He suggested that the Group could request the Secretary-General to consider the possibility of UN-OHRLLS together with UNCTAD, World Bank, International Trade Centre, DESA and other important agencies to prepare the roadmap.

Agenda item 2: INFORMAL PREPARATORY DISCUSSION WITH THE MEMBER STATES PRIOR TO THE DIALOGUE WITH THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

Deputy Permanent Representative of Afghanistan expressed his support for inclusion of paragraph related to LLDCs in the WTO_MC12 outcome but emphasized the need for an expert group meeting in New York to prepare for the resolution on trade and

development. He noted that there were only 5 years left before the final review of the implementation of the VPoA and expressed his support for the idea of a roadmap. He also emphasized the need to strengthen the LLDC unit in OHRLLS and DESA.

Permanent Representative of Mali noted that within the Group of LLDCs there were also countries in crisis such as, volatile situation, economic stagnation, youth unemployment and health care issues. He noted that in addition to the implementation of the VPoA these issues need to be considered. He stated that he would draw attention of the Secretary General these issues and ask him to highlight the specific mechanisms put in place by the UN to support these countries.

Representative of Botswana highlighted the need for enhanced coordination within the group regarding their participation in different committees within the UN in particular the Second and the Fifth committee. He also brought to the attention of the meeting the importance of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and highlighted that it set priorities for the organization and encouraged the group to ensure coordination with the committee too.

Item 3: INFORMAL DIALOGUE OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL WITH THE MEMBER STATES.

3.1 Remarks by Chair of the LLDC Group, H.E. Ambassador Kairat Umarov

The Chair expressed his gratitude to Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres for addressing the LLDC Group about his vision and pragmatic strategy for the future. He highlighted that the objective of the meeting was to share the main priorities of LLDCs in this Decade of Action with the Secretary-General.

He highlighted that the 32 LLDCs, with a combined population of around 509 million, still face special challenges related to their geographical remoteness, lack of direct access to the sea and isolation from the world trade and economic opportunities. He further highlighted other challenges including inadequate infrastructure, cumbersome border crossing procedures, as well as structural deficiencies and that these were compounded by limited capacities to deal with external shocks and dependence on very restricted commodities for exports. He emphasized that climate change threats such as land degradation, water resources scarcity, and glaciers melting further aggravated the challenges of the LLDCs. He noted the need to raise awareness, including in the UN system organizations regarding all the issues.

He highlighted that the Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action was completed in December 2019 and that the assessments clearly indicate that progress in the last five years was not enough to meet the objectives of VPoA or to achieve the SDGs by 2030. He made the observation that the UN projects were developed on individual country-specific basis however numerous challenges were transboundary in nature. He emphasized that modern world of intense globalization and deep mutual integration requires finding new approaches in settling the international issues, including on the regional and interregional basis.

He noted the significance of the 75th Anniversary of the UN and noted that it should become a turning point for an enhanced global dialogue which should result in concrete actions and outcomes to reach Agenda 2030. He expressed the support of the Group to Secretary-General's tireless efforts in promoting the multilateral approach in promoting the UN Reform.

Chair informed that in his discussions in New York as well as in Geneva, different UN agencies expressed their willingness to prepare a Roadmap or visionary document on practical steps that could be taken to implement the Vienna Programme of Action and the Decade of Action. In this regard he requested the Secretary-General to consider the possibility of UN-OHRLLS in collaboration with UNCTAD, World Bank, International Trade Centre, DESA and other important stakeholders to prepare the roadmap.

Chair expressed his gratitude to High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and her staff for their commitment, and he appealed to Secretary-General to endow OHRLLS with the necessary resources to enable effective implementation of its mandate of supporting the LLDCs.

3.2 Remarks by United Nations Secretary-General

H.E. Mr. António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General expressed his pleasure to join the meeting and thanked Chair, His Excellency Ambassador Kairat Umarov, for his efforts. He also expressed his admiration for the tireless efforts of LLDCs in addressing the challenges associated with the geographic and other constraints they face. He noted that in line with the Paris Agreement, the LLDC Group was focusing intently on addressing the climate crisis, desertification, droughts, land degradation and natural disasters. He also noted that through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, LLDCs were taking steps to boost trade, forge transit links, advance digital connectivity and diversify their economies. He stressed that regional cooperation and integration was paramount in building corridors of trade and prosperity. He highlighted that the development aspirations of LLDCs have long had to contend with hard facts of circumstance such as remoteness, size amongst other factors. He noted that today, additional threats including protracted conflicts, rising tensions over trade and technology and now, the effects of the COVID-19 were endangering progress and exacerbating the existing challenges.

Secretary-General highlighted that one third of the 509 million people in LLDCs still lived in extreme poverty and that people already felt untouched by the broad thrust of global progress and thus feared being left behind by globalization. He stressed that as the member states embarked on a Decade of Action to deliver the global goals and strived to accelerate implementation of the Vienna Programmes of Action, greater support for landlocked developing countries was essential. He thus called for strong partnerships and an active sharing of lessons and successful experiences among LLDCs, transit countries, development actors and other stakeholders.

He commended LLDCs that had presented their voluntary national reviews at the High-Level Political Forum including the thirteen that will do so in 2020 and five of them for the second time. He noted that south-south cooperation is an invaluable source of lessons and support. He highlighted that 17 of the 32 LLDCs also share the challenges of being LDCs. He further highlighted some of the challenges faced by LLDCs including that LLDCs pay more than double in transport costs compared to their transit neighbours, their exports remain highly concentrated in a few primary commodities, with limited capacity to produce high-value products and that access to finance remained a significant challenge. He noted that much of the official development assistance continued to target just a few of LLDCs, foreign direct investment flows to LLDCs were declining and illicit financial flows continue to have adverse impact on public finances.

Secretary-General highlighted that the reformed UN development system, with empowered Resident Coordinators and a new generation of Country Teams, was better positioned to provide tailored support, integrated policy advice and technical capacities to LLDCs to address their priorities. He informed that he would take steps to strengthen the capacities of the OHRLS in line with General Assembly resolution 74/262 adopted in December 2019.

In concluding his remarks Secretary-General expressed the UN's commitment to provide support to turn landlocked developing countries into land-linked engines of dynamism. He added that prosperity in LLDCs would help ensure a better future for all. He emphasized that finding and scaling-up solutions must be a collective priority, from defeating climate change to eradicating poverty and across the shared agenda.

3.3. Interactive Discussion

Ambassador of Paraguay thanked the Chair for convening the meeting and appreciated the Secretary-General for his attendance. He noted that Paraguay has reached agreement with UN on 17 February regarding cooperation framework for sustainable development for the period 2020-2024, which was the first of a kind among Latin American and the Caribbean Region. The framework agreement brings together Government of Paraguay and UN at highest level, as well as engagement of the private sector. He noted that the framework also brought together UN Agencies in the country and in the region. He assured that government of Paraguay will continue working closely with all parties. He commended the Secretary-General for the decision to reposition the United Nations development system.

Ambassador of Nepal highlighted that the LLDCs' trade costs were twice as much as their coastal counterparts and also noted that LLDCs only contribute as little as one percent to global trade. He noted the marginalization of the LLDCs was due partly to lack of connectivity infrastructure, efficient transit regime and lack of productive capacity. He called on the UN System to dedicate more resources to infrastructure development. He emphasized the need to enhance advocacy and outreach efforts to facilitate implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and build synergies between the VPoA, the 2030 Agenda. He recalled the GA resolution A/74/233 that

underlined the need to give particular attention to specific challenges of the LLDCs. He called for the strengthening of OHRLLS in order to effectively take up this mandate and he emphasized that OHRLLS should be strengthened sooner than later.

He also noted that climate change has emerged as an existential global issue as already identified as one of the apocalyptic horsemen recently by the Secretary-General and that the LLDCs were affected by the crisis. He noted that the current climate change finance architecture has no dedicated window for LLDCs. He requested the Secretary-General not to leave LLDCs behind on climate action and climate financing.

The Ambassador of Mali thanked the Chair and welcomed the Secretary-General. He highlighted that within the Group of LLDCs there were countries that were more vulnerable than others especially countries in crisis. He cited countries in the Sahel region. He noted that young people in these countries were neglected. He highlighted that the challenges affected implementation. He noted that the Secretary-General would visit the region. He emphasized the importance of stability to sustainable development. He also emphasized that there was need to look at other approaches besides the UN support. He suggested that it was important to also explore other approaches including by World Bank Group and other relevant organizations.

The Ambassador of Bhutan expressed her appreciation to the Chair for convening the meeting and thanked the Secretary-General for his commitment to facilitate prosperity in the LLDCs. She highlighted that digital technology had the potential to enable LLDCs to leapfrog and accelerate the implementation of the VPoA. She noted that digital technology was a fundamental element for LLDCs to achieve SDGs and ensuring that no one was left behind by ensuring people were not excluded from digital economy. In this regard, she called for support from the UN system in putting together building blocks such as digital skills, necessary infrastructure, enabling regulatory and policy environment. She suggested that these aspects be included into the future roadmap of the LLDCs Group and brought to attention of the UN system.

The Ambassador of Tajikistan stressed that LLDCs continue to face challenges of connectivity. He shared Tajikistan's efforts to enhance connectivity with its neighboring countries including through building road infrastructure. He also noted that LLDCs were faced with climate change related challenges that causes negative impact to water resources, transport and energy infrastructure. He recalled the High-Level Conference on International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development held in 2018 in Tajikistan and indicated that the next conference in 2020 will be in New York and pre-conference would be hosted by Portugal. He emphasized the need to enhance support towards the implementation of SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation).

The representative of Botswana thanked the Chair for organizing the meeting and appreciated the engagement of the Secretary-General to communicate and share insights with LLDCs. He recalled resolution 74/262 paragraph 48 on SIDS and LLDCs which requested Secretary-General to take action to ensure that additional post and

non-post resources are allocated to the subprogrammes in the context of 2021 budget to enable the subprogrammes to effectively deliver on their mandates. He enquired if the resolution will be implemented if subprogramme 2 will be supported with both post and non-post resources as per the paragraph.

The representative of Afghanistan thanked the Secretary-General for joining the meeting. He stressed two points. He emphasized that the commitments by all stakeholders in implementing the VPoA was fundamental. He accentuated the need to strengthen OHRLLS and DESA to support the implementation of the VPoA. He also underscored the importance of regional integration but highlighted that security issues remain a concern for some of the LLDCs.

The Ambassador of Armenia appreciated the Chair and welcomed the participation of the Secretary-General to the meeting. He noted the linkage between the VPoA, 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework and other multilateral agreements. He emphasized the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action was important for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. He emphasized that the importance of regional and sub-regional cooperation for the development of LLDCs. He therefore underscored that special attention should be paid to enhancing cooperation with transit countries to ensure connectivity and free movement of people, goods and services. He noted that connectivity was fundamental in bringing people together. He expressed his faith in transforming LLDCs into land-linked countries and emphasized the need for concerted efforts by all the relevant stakeholders.

Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan recalled that there were only ten years left to achieve the SDGs. She highlighted that the LLDCs need more support including financial support. She therefore emphasized that building strong partnerships with the international financial institutions was necessary to achieve sustainable development in LLDCs.

Permanent Representative of Ethiopia highlighted that many LLDCs are taking policy measures that enhance their connectedness. He noted that progress was achieved in road, rail and airport infrastructure development. He indicated that to expand connectedness, there was need to mobilize more resources including support from the international community. He emphasized the need to implement the commitments made in the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. He requested the support of the Secretary-General to facilitate global consensus particularly on issues stipulated in the VPoA particularly regarding the private sector. He indicated that they looked forward to policy recommendations relating to addressing the high transport costs and reduction of costs of goods and services particularly from UN regional offices.

Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan noted that his country attached great importance to the implementation of the VPoA to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth. He noted that the VPoA speaks clearly of the need to promote meaningful regional integration and he underscored that peace and stability were fundamental prerequisite to achieving regional integration. He emphasized that the envisaged

roadmap for the implementation of the VPoA should adopt a balanced approach and should include best practices and lessons learned. He underscored the importance of the contribution of all the relevant UN Agencies in developing the roadmap.

Permanent Representative of Bolivia noted the importance of trade corridors and enquired if Secretary-General was working closely with the regional organizations including regional banks to support implementation of trade corridors. He shared that in his region they were working with the Inter-American Development Bank to enhance regional integration. He also expressed appreciation towards Secretary-General's efforts on tackling climate change challenges.

Permanent Representative of Lesotho applauded the leadership of the group and the support of OHRLLS to the Group. He highlighted three things. He requested the Secretary-General to encourage closer collaboration and partnership between the UN Agencies. He emphasized the need to not only focus on the challenges of the LLDCs but also explored their potential. He also emphasized the importance of regional integration and highlighted that it is important to realize that the growth of LLDCs would also benefit their transit neighbors.

Permanent Representative of Lao PDR emphasized that as the Decade of Action was beginning it was important to ensure means of implementation were in place. He enquired if Secretary-General had identified new or alternative financial mechanisms necessary to realize the objective of the VPoA as well as other programmes of Action. He further inquired about the roles of the partners, UN agencies and the private sector in the implementation of the VPoA.

Chargé d'affaires of North Macedonia noted that globalization and FDI left the LLDCs behind. He noted that impacted employment and workforce and led to huge migration levels especially of skilled workforce and youth. He noted that the situation impacted the implementation of the development agenda. He noted that Secretary-General was in the process of having dialogue with the youths and requested to hear his opinion on the issues.

3.4. Response by the Secretary-General

In his response to questions and comments made H.E. Mr. António Guterres, thanked Paraguay for the implementation of the initiative and indicated that he hoped other countries would follow. He took note of the comments by Nepal on the need for enhanced connectivity and building productive capacity and the dramatic impact of climate change especially in the Himalayan region. He that the highlighted region was of great concern for the UN.

On the question on finance and means of implementation he stressed three points. He emphasized that it was important to be firm in telling the development partners to live to their commitment in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. He also noted that it was important for countries to do their best to increase their capacity

to mobilize their own resources but noted in some cases there was a long way to achieve this. He accentuated that international organizations need to provide technical support in view of the fact that national efforts to mobilize own resources can be undermined by tax evasion, money laundering and illicit financial flows. On the third point he emphasized the use of financial institutions and others to de-risk private investment and to create the conditions for new forms of innovative finance to be adopted by countries including green bond and social impact bond and others with the support of international institutions like World Bank as well as regional banks.

In response to Mali he expressed his support to Mali. He emphasized the need to adopt risk reduction measures with a view to encouraging the private sector to invest.

He noted that the digital economy is a great opportunity for the landlocked countries provided investment is made into skills development, legal framework and infrastructure development. He emphasized the importance of human capacity and highlighted that the UN could provide support in this area. He gave an example of the case of Rwanda where all schools are linked to broadband and has all conditions to attract foreign investment in relation to ICT. He stressed the importance of peace in regional integration and connectivity. He noted that peace in Afghanistan could greatly benefit Central Asia in facilitating connectivity.

Responding to Botswana he indicated that the interpretation is that he will do what he can to strengthen OHRLLS and he expressed his hope that there will be goodwill support on the side of the Member States to avoid shrinking the budget to allow the decision to be implemented in 2021.

He expressed that landlockedness should not be a problem if the neighboring countries are not obstacles. He indicated that if it is possible to cross the borders and move freely without customs, bureaucracy and transport regulation, landlockedness should not pose any challenges. He therefore stressed that efforts in regional cooperation, regional integration, easy border regulatory requirements were essential. He noted that Ethiopia despite being landlocked had experienced the highest growth in the last ten years and that proved that things could be done.

He acknowledged the need for global consensus to create instruments to facilitate private sector investment in the context of the VPoA. He noted that he fully agrees with the need for regional integration as mentioned by the representative of Azerbaijan. He thanked Laos for mentioning the Decade of Action and stressed the importance of support by developed countries to facilitate implementation, mobilize national resources and support by financial institutions.

Regarding migration he noted that there was need for it to be viewed differently as it is a problem for the countries that are sources rather than the beneficiary or recipient countries. In this regard He stressed the importance in investing in opportunities for the youth as highlighted by North Macedonia. He expressed that he is fully committed to the cause of the LLDCs.

AGENDA ITEM 5: FOLLOW-UP INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION OF THE MEMBER STATES AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

H.E. Ambassador Kairat Umarov expressed his gratitude to the Secretary-General and invited the Secretary-General to continue to participate in such meetings on a regular basis in the future.

Chair welcomed the new Ambassadors in particular, Ambassadors of Mongolia and of Zambia. They both thanked Chair for the warm welcome and expressed their support for the Chair and readiness to work with the Group of LLDCs.

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